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Michigan celebrates adoption

Special day unites children with their new parents

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- Darlene and Robert Discher struggled for 12 years with pregnancy losses, in vitro fertilization attempts and infertility before their dreams came true.

Sitting before them Tuesday were their three smiling children: Chas, 9; Douglas, 6; and Michael, 3 -- all adopted and all official members of the Discher family of Walled Lake.

"At first I thought it might just be one," Darlene said of adopting Chas, her first child. "But after having one, we got hooked."

Michael, a quiet, brown-haired toddler, was the Discher family's latest adoption and one of 270 adoptions finalized and celebrated Tuesday across Michigan as part of Michigan Adoption Day.

More than 40 Michigan counties participated in the event, which takes place on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, making it the largest Adoption Day in the nation for the third year in a row.

From wide-eyed newborns to soft-spoken adolescents, 19 children were adopted Tuesday in Oakland County Circuit Court. Wayne County had 15 adoptions and Macomb County 11.

The children came from a variety of backgrounds: some had been permanently removed from their birth parents for neglect and abuse, some were adopted by a step-parent, one child had been left at a hospital under the state's Safe Delivery of Newborns law, while others, like 16-month-old Derek Steele, were the result of international adoptions.

Sitting before Judge Martha Anderson, Dawn and Chris Steele of Lake Orion waited for the words they longed to hear after hiring an adoption agency to match them with a child in South Korea.

"This is your baby now. It's official," Anderson told the couple as Chris gave his son a bear hug and Dawn clapped her hands and cried, "Yeah!"

"He has been home with us since March 18 but it is official now. We are always going to be his mommy and daddy," Dawn Steele said.

Judge Eugene Arthur Moore, who was recognized Tuesday for his work as an Oakland

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County probate judge, thanked the thousands of adoptive and foster parents who he said have made the world a better place by taking children into their homes.

"You've gone one mile further than those who've had their own children," Moore said.

While Tuesday was a day of tears, hugs and joy for the new parents and their children, some 4,400 children in Michigan's foster care system are still waiting to be adopted. Most children who are waiting for a family are older, minorities or members of sibling groups.

In Oakland County adoptive families gathered in an "adoption reception room" where new parents and their children had their photographs taken with judges and kids had free access to animal crackers, juice boxes and balloons.

Like most first-time parents Joe and Anita Miller juggled a stroller, a diaper bag and a sippy cup as they tended to their two adopted children, Ava, 2 and Isaac, 7 months. The Millers, formerly of Ferndale but now Ohio residents, were at Ava's birth and have an open adoption policy with the birth parents of both children.

Asked what he most looks forward to with his new children, Joe Miller, a stay-at-home dad, says: "A normal family life, every milestone. He started crawling a month ago," Miller said. "The same things other families look forward to."

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Morris Richardson II / The Detroit News

Poppy Krause of Commerce Township and her daughter Gabriella enjoy juice, cookies and balloons in the "adoption reception room" Tuesday at the Oakland County Courthouse. ▶ [See full image](#)

For information

For information on children awaiting adoption:

In Michigan: call Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at (800) 589-6273 or go online to www.mare.org.

In the U.S.: www.adoptUSkids.org.

For information on public adoption policies and data, go to www.michigan.gov/dhs and click on adoption.

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